
**Abstract:**
Modern research ethics has generally centered on safeguarding the autonomy of subjects and protecting them from the risks of medical research. However, many research activities present risks to non-participants such as family members, health care personnel, communities, or unrelated members of the public. Studies that pose risks to these bystanders range from the relatively conventional (such as outpatient rehabilitation trials) to those at biomedicine’s cutting edge (like xenotransplantation). Applying independent risk review and informed consent to protect bystanders would greatly complicate the work of ethics committees and investigators. Nevertheless, bystanders probably deserve some form of research protections under certain circumstances. Several arguments are offered for why a more sustained inquiry into the ethics of bystanders risk is needed. I close with a series of questions that may help guide that exploration.